

2024-08-18 13th Sun. after Pentecost John 6:51-58 Sermon

By The Reverend Cheryl Kester-Schmidt

This is week four in the sixth chapter of John's gospel about Jesus being the Bread of Life. Jesus must think this information is important because He continues to repeat His main points.

It reminds me of my 8th grade English teacher, Ms. Favorite, who repeatedly drummed the rules for diagraming sentences into my heads. I hated that part, but I learned it well. Little did I know that 45 years later, her repetitive teaching would help me pass Greek because knowing the parts of speech were important. I moved through by diagraming those loooooonnnnnnggg sentences of Paul's.

Then as now I have pondered, how many more times can we hear something and not tune out. How many ways can I preach Jesus saying, "I am the true bread from heaven?"

Those of us who teach are taught that being repetitive is a good thing. We need to hear things over and over to truly incorporate the information into our minds.

John, also, thinks we need to hear it over and over and over. This week the message leaves nothing to the imagination and is disturbing.

There is a seminary story that lingers even today about a little girl who was paying close attention to the Pastor's words from the Communion liturgy one Sunday. She perked up when she heard, *"Take, eat, this is my body given for you; take and drink, this is my blood, poured out for your sins."*

The solemnity of the moment was broken by the little girl's very loud, "Ew, yuck!"

We might also ponder why this reading is important to us - What does this repetitive chapter in John about bread, flesh and blood help us move through any tough moment in our lives?

"Pastor, I worry about inflation, how to make a house payment

and how to raise my children or grandchildren in this world. Why does this matter? I already love Jesus.”

John is not just repeating our last two Sunday texts but the point really goes back to when Jesus fed the five thousand with 5 loaves and two fish. He is intentionally moving us deeper into the meaning of what was revealed in those actions.

The crowd listening to Jesus are getting more and more agitated. The Greek word is defined as almost fighting. Last week they grumbled and today they are into full blown arguments. They probably could have used the Tenets of Civil Discourse we have been learning in Adult Sunday, but I digress.

Jesus says He is sent from God and insists anyone who believes He is God’s Son must eat his flesh and drink his blood. The Jews thought this repulsive. We too, may find it gross and disgusting.

Theologian Brian Peterson writes, “Translating this passage into English still does not make Jesus’ intent clear. His

explanation gets a bit revolting and then He switches to a less common Greek word, *trogo*, which means gnawing, munching or of noisy eating, the sort of eating an animal does. The point is - this is urgent, perhaps desperate eating. Eating as though life depends on it because it does."

Then, Jesus gets to the heart of his message. If we do not take him into ourselves urgently, desperately, guzzling his life blood, we are dead. "*Unless you do this,*" he says, "*you have no life in you.*"

Claiming we are followers of Jesus Christ is a life-or-death matter. Hebrew tradition says, "it is the blood that carries the life force of any living being." It makes sense that unless we take Christ's "*life force*" into us - we die.

Jesus tells us He is the living Bread. The important word here is living, not dying. Jesus as the bread of life is connected to the living Jesus, not the dying Jesus. He is offering us His flesh to eat in the middle of his ministry.

Jesus is not trying to get us to understand as much as he is trying to get us to eat. He is making a promise. When we take Jesus into us – He becomes part of us down to the cellular level. He gives life to us.

Pr. Chris Heinhold at Shiner had this blurb in the bulletin for deanery and I am stealing it. No clue where it came from: "They say, 'You are what you eat.' But that is not really true. You may eat lots of bacon, but you do not turn into a pig. Eating a lot of carrots will not turn you into a carrot. This is true with everything we eat – except for the bread and wine of Holy Communion. When we eat and drink of the bread and wine we become Jesus. We become resurrected people, we become people of forgiveness, we become people of faith, we become like Jesus."

My sisters and brothers, God promises us life in the present. God abides in us and we in Him. Jesus wants us to fully live in this moment as we eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood in the here and now. We take His life force into ourselves and He

courses through our veins. We have a full life in the present and will be raised with Him on the last day.

The Eucharist is the gift of life from Jesus - strong food and joyful drink – both the fruit of God's creation and work of human hands. It is the gift of God who became one of us. It is the gift of love with sacrifice.

Jesus is the Son of God, sent from above, to feed the world for all time. Christ does not want just a part of us, He wants all of us. In turn, we are to receive all of Him. We are to totally commit to life in Christ, in all aspects of our lives.

When we're feeling less-than; ugly; unforgiveable – Jesus says, "Eat this bread."

When we are feeling sick; broken; unredeemable; unloved; unlovable – Jesus says, "Drink this wine."¹

¹ ["Eat Me" - John 6:51-58 — Cross of Grace](#)

In this bread, there is healing, in this cup is life forever. And
all God's children say, "Amen!"